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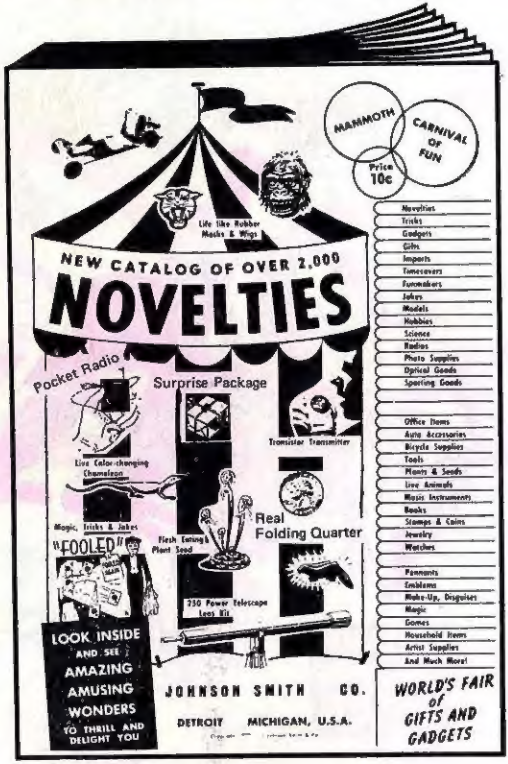

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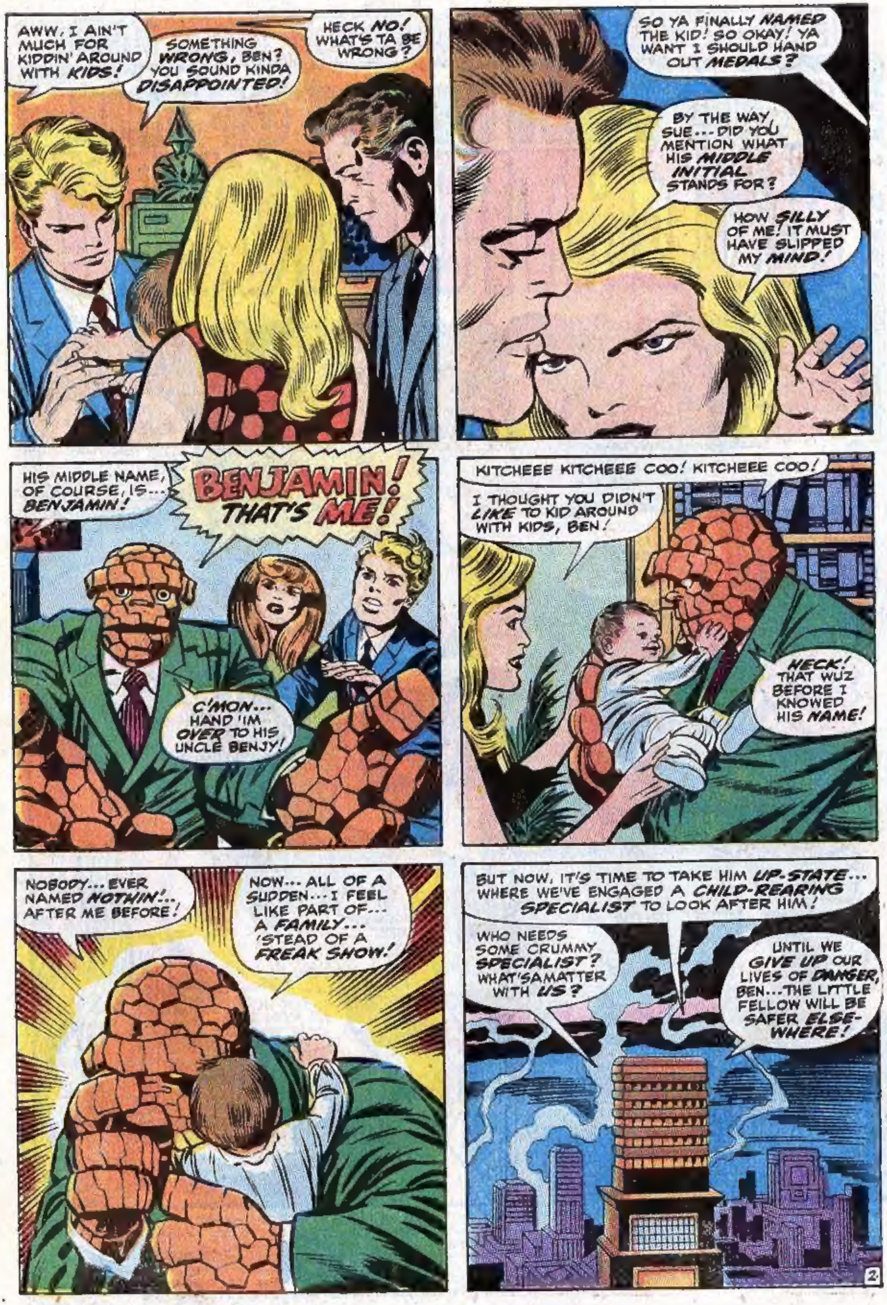
AWW, I AIN'T MUCH FOR KIDDIN' AROUND WITH KIDS!
SOMETHING WRONG, BEN? YOU SOUND KINDA DISAPPOINTED!
HECK NO! WHAT'S TA BE WRONG?
SO YA FINALLY NAMED THE KID! SO OKAY! YA WANT I SHOULD HAND OUT MEDALS?
BY THE WAY, SUE... DID YOU MENTION WHAT HIS MIDDLE INITIAL STANDS FOR?
HOW SILLY OF ME! IT MUST HAVE SLIPPED MY MIND!
HIS MIDDLE NAME, OF COURSE, IS... BENJAMIN!
BENJAMIN! THAT'S ME!
C'MON... HAND 'IM OVER TO HIS UNCLE BENJY!
KITCHEEE KITCHEEE COO! KITCHEEE COO!
I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE TO KID AROUND WITH KIDS, BEN!
HECK! THAT WUZ BEFORE I KNOWED HIS NAME!
NOBODY... EVER NAMED NOTHIN'... AFTER ME BEFORE!
NOW... ALL OF A SUDDEN... I FEEL LIKE PART OF... A FAMILY... 'STEAD OF A FREAK SHOW!
BUT NOW, IT'S TIME TO TAKE HIM UP-STATE... WHERE WE'VE ENGAGED A CHILD-REARING SPECIALIST TO LOOK AFTER HIM!
WHO NEEDS SOME CRUMMY SPECIALIST? WHAT'SAMATTER WITH US?
UNTIL WE GIVE UP OUR LIVES OF DANGER, BEN... THE LITTLE FELLOW WILL BE SAFER ELSE-WHERE!
2

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MEANWHILE, IN A LONELY HOUSE, ATOP A LONELY HILL...
PATIENCE, EBONY... PATIENCE! THEY WILL BE HERE SOON!
ALTHOUGH I HAVE LIVED IN RETIREMENT FOR YEARS...
I COULD NOT SAY NO TO MY NEWEST CHARGE... WHEN I LEARNED THE IDENTITY OF HIS PARENTS!
I THINK WE ARE DUE FOR SOME INTERESTING MOMENTS, MY PET!
LATER, IN THE TEETH OF A MOUNTING STORM, WE FIND...
YOU PICKED A HECKUVA NIGHT FOR A JOY-RIDE, MISTER!
DON'T WORRY, BEN! SINCE JOHNNY MODIFIED THE FANTASTI-CAR, SHE CAN WEATHER A GALE LIKE THIS WITH EASE!
YOU DON'T THINK I'D TAKE LITTLE FRANKLIN IF IT WASN'T SAFE?
I THOUGHT YOU WUZ GONNA CALL HIM BENJY, AFTER MY FAVORITE ---HEY!! NOW WHAT?
JUST AN UP-DRAFT, OLD FRIEND! WE'RE OKAY!
ANYWAY, FOR A MAN WHO WAS ONE OF THE TOP FIGHTER PILOTS OF WORLD WAR TWO, YOU'RE MIGHTY JITTERY THESE DAYS!
ME? I AIN'T GOT A JITTERY BONE IN MY WHOLE, LOVEABLE LITTLE BODY!
I'M JUST PLAIN SCARED!
HEY! UP ON THAT HILL ...THAT JOINT LOOKS LIKE DRACULA'S DREAM HOUSE!
THAT "JOINT" IS THE HOME OF AGATHA HARKNESS, ATOP WHISPER HILL...
IT'S THE PLACE TO WHICH WE'RE BRINGING THE BABY!
4

GOSH, SIS... WHEN REED SAID NOBODY WOULD BE APT TO FIND THIS PLACE, HE SURE WASN'T KIDDING!
IT'S JUST WHAT WE WANTED, JOHNNY... IT'S SECLUDED, SERENE, AND I PRAY THAT IT'S SAFE!
DON'T JUDGE A PLACE BY ITS LOOKS, BEN! MISS HARKNESS HAPPENS TO HAVE A WORLD-FAMOUS REPUTATION!
YEAH? FOR WHAT? BEIN' THE TOP GRAVEYARD MANAGER OF THE YEAR?
LET'S GO IN! I'M SURE WE'LL TAKE HER TO OUR HEARTS AS SOON AS WE MEET HER!
WHO'S GONNA OPEN THE DOOR... BARNABAS, OR QUASIMODO?
I AM AGATHA HARKNESS... AND THIS IS EBONY! YOU MAY ENTER!
5

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

A SAGACIOUS SMATTERING OF SOMEWHAT SENSELESS SMALL-TALK!

ITEM! Wanna know why we're always bragging that Marvel's riotous readers are a cut above average? Well, try this for a clincher. A short time ago, Sheldon Feldner, director of Univ. of California Vera Cruz' University Theatre (and an R.F.O. and K.O.F. to boot), probably having heard that STAN THE MAN is a dyed-in-the-wool Shakespeare buff, contacted the Bullpen to see if we'd help with UCVC's University Theatre Company's production of Julius Caesar. To make a long story short, Fearless Feldner recruited JACK (KING) KIRBY to do the costume designing for the show, while the rest of us contributed our moral support and not-inconsiderable kibitzing talents. Well, the show was a smash when presented on the Coast—with closed-circuit TV yet! And we're gonna frame all the great newspaper clippings that praised Jack's artistry and were good enough to mention merry Marvel in connection with so erudite an endeavor! —Next month, the Palladium!

ITEM! Speaking of JOLLY JACK, many long-time fans have been writing to say that THE FANTASTIC FOUR is getting better each issue — with the stories reading more like the memorable masterworks of the FF's early years. This kinda breaks us up, 'cause it's beginning to seem as though we have to take a few steps back in order to surge forward! (The philosophers among you — and what Marvelite isn't? — can mull that one over for a while).

ITEM! Stop worrying! Dry your little tears! Let thy faith be renewed! Despite what you saw in the last ish of SHIELD, we promise you that Nick Fury lives! But don't take our words for it — latch onto AVENGERS #72 (on sale early in Nov.) and see for yourself — in living color!

ITEM! In answer to the countless thousands who wanna know where we've hidden JAUNTY JIM STERANKO (well, we did get a postcard or two) — you may have trouble believing this, but it's on the level. Last time we saw him, Slim Jim turned down just about every strip we asked him to draw, saying there was only one he wanted to sink his teeth into. We tremblingly asked which it was, and he answered — (hold onto your hairdo, hero) — he's itching to draw a ROMANCE yarn! Try as we may, we couldn't talk him out of it. So, we gave him a hearts-and-flowers assignment for one of our love books, and he left on cloud nine. That was weeks ago and we haven't seen him since. All we can think of is that the sonofagun is out doing some personal research! Well, we'll keep you posted!

ITEMS! (Some fast one-liners while space permits.) PEERLESS PAUL REINMAN will be pencilling for us once again in our two new spooky mags! . . . Talk about versatility! JIM (MADMAN) MOONEY is not only a top penciller and inker, but a sculptor, painter, guitarist, and authority on antiques, as well! . . . We're still trying to decide whether MERRY MARIE SEVERIN is our funniest dramatic artist, or our most dramatic humorous cartoonist! (But either way, we love the gal!) . . . Say "Hi" to AMIABLE ALLYN BRODSKY, our youthful new editorial staffer. He's the only guy we know who talks as fast as RASCALLY ROY. Good thing SMILEY isn't a slow listener! . . . WILD BILL EVERETT is now writing scripts for us — and they're even zingier than the great SUB-MARINERS he cooked up about a zillion years ago! . . . Have you ever seen a strip that didn't look great when inked by the way-out wizardry of TERRIFIC TOMMY PALMER? (We haven't!)

STAN'S SOAPBOX

It's almost unbelievable! We thought it would shake you up when we announced our intention of dropping continued stories — but we never expected to be so completely swamped by an avalanche of irate letters, cards, and telegrams! Even those of you who once thought we were overdoing our continued yarns have threatened to bring the wrath of Marveldom Assembled upon our pointy heads if we dare to drop our never-ending sub-plots. And, so, it's "Here's where Stan tries to get off the hook" time again! We promise NOT to drop our swingin' sub-plots — we never intended to, anyway. All we want to do is see if we can end each story within a single issue. That doesn't mean we may not bring back the villain next ish — or let a running plot-thread continue. But, we want to make it less of a catastrophe if a Believer happens to miss a yarn. Also, we'd like to feel that a new reader can join us 'most anywhere without needing a road map. It's still too early to tell if we're gonna wind up with egg on our faces again, but we promise you this — if our earth-shattering new policy hasn't really grabbed you by the time you read these portentious words — don't worry! We'll switch back to our old, cataclysmically confusin', continued-story policy before you can say "No wonder they dumped ol' Stan!"

Excelsior!

Smiley

. . . The block-bustin' BUSCEMA brothers (BIG JOHN and OUR PAL SAL) better look to their laurels! JAZZY JOHNNY ROMITA is teaching JOHN JR. how to draw superhero spectaculars, and we hear that the lad's a whiz already! So, as soon as we have a pair of RING-A-DINGS running wild around here, let's look out for the fireworks! . . . The votes have been counted! A united Marveldom wants STAN AND JACK to come up with an INHUMANS mag for 1970, or they'll sic Lockjaw on 'em!

THE MIGHTY MARVEL CHECKLIST

Marvel-ous Mags On Sale Right Now!

FANTASTIC FOUR #94: The return of the Frightful Four! With mystic witchcraft — and a brand new character!

SPIDER-MAN #80: Remember the Chameleon? Well, how can Spidey fight a man who could be anyone? You'll never guess the ending!

SILVER SURFER #11: The Surfer and Shalla Bal face-to-face at last — while the Sky-Rider combats an army! But then — disaster!

AVENGERS #71: The battle that time forgot! The Avengers take on Cap, the Torch, and Namor in wartime Paris! Don't miss "Endgame!"

THOR #171: The Wrecker is back — with a city at his mercy! But Thor has an operation to perform! Talk about suspense — !

CAPTAIN AMERICA #121: The Man-Brute is born — stronger, faster than Cap himself! But what is the terrible secret which haunts him?

X-MEN #63: Magneto returns — with a new horde of Evil Mutants at his side! Guest-starring the one and only Ka-Zar!

DAREDEVIL #59: Willie Lincoln is marked for death — by the murderous new villain they call the Torpedo! Action all the way!

HULK #123: The Leader is back — and out for vengeance! And if he can't find the Hulk, then Bruce Banner will do! A thriller!

IRON MAN #21: Tony Stark retires! A new Iron Man is born! But then — enter the new and deadlier Crimson Dynamo!

SUB-MARINER #21: It had to happen! Atlantis invades the surface world! But — which side is Namor on?

SGT. FURY #73: The fiercest, fightin'est battleground of all — as the Howlers go into action on the Russian Front! A comic-mag first!

TOWER OF SHADOWS #3: The grooviest, most gargoyle-laden goodies of all — told in Marvel's midnight manner!

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES #24: DD meets the Purple Man! Plus an early Lee-Kirby X-Men classic! A bargain-basement blast!

MARVEL TALES #24: Spidey — Thor — and the terrifically torrid Torch! What more can any superhero buff ask?

AND, OF COURSE —

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AND, STILL ON SALE — !

CAPTAIN MARVEL #19: "The Mad Master of the Murder Maze!" A kookie title — for one of the most offbeat sagas of all!

CHAMBER OF DARKNESS #2: A face in a mirror! A book that foretells the future! A chiller by Edgar Allan Poe! It's a must!

MARVEL'S GREATEST COMICS #24: The F.F. — Iron Man — Dr. Strange — and an all-new Watcher epic! Bargains galore!

CAPT. SAVAGE #17: The spotlight — and the gunsights — are trained on Jay Little Bear! Like great!

OUR LOVE STORY #2: Even if you don't dig gals' mags, think of the fun you'll have trying to guess which strip was drawn by whom!

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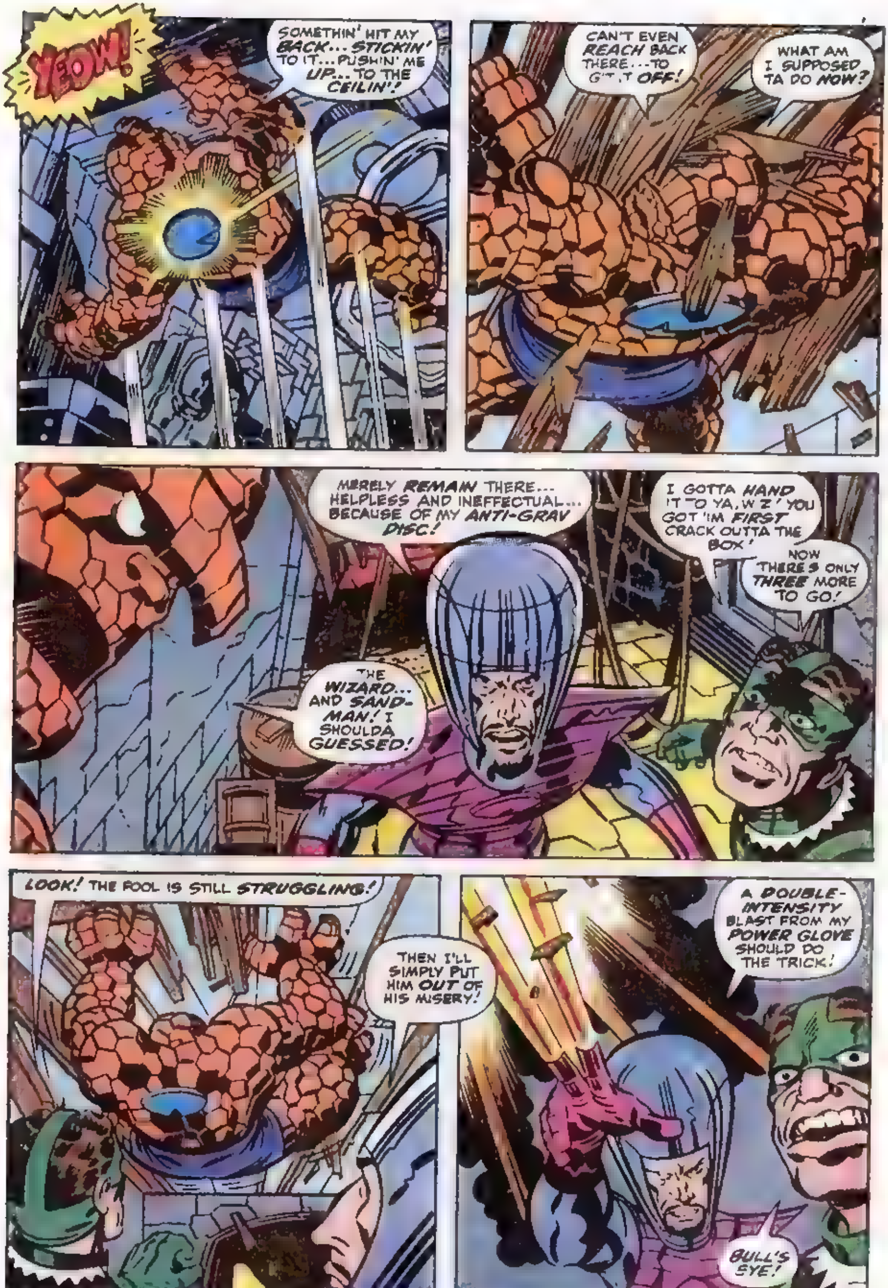
I ALWAYS TOLD YA, KID...THAT HUMAN RUBBERBAND IS OUTTA HIS TREE FER SURE!
I WOUDN'T EVEN LET THAT OLD CROW TAKE CARE'A MY AUNT PETUNIA!
WELL, I'LL ADMIT SHE'S NOT EXACTLY A BUNDLE OF LAUGHS, BENJY!
LAUGHS?!! EVEN HER PAINTINGS ARE FRESH OUTTA A LATE SHOW HORROR FLICK!
I LL BET HER IDEA OF A FUN EVENIN' IS GOIN' TO A SWINGIN' FUNERAL!
SUDDENLY...
HEY! WHAT HAPPENED? THE WHOLE BLASTED WALL IS TURNIN' AROUND...
I'M FALLIN' THRU!
ONLY ONE THING LEFT TO HAPPEN NEXT...
I'LL SIT 'N WAIT FER VINCENT PRICE TA SHOW UP!
7.


YEOW!
SOMETHIN' HIT MY BACK... STICKIN' TO IT... PUSHIN' ME UP... TO THE CEILIN'!
CAN'T EVEN REACH BACK THERE...TO GIT IT OFF!
WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TA DO NOW?
MERELY REMAIN THERE... HELPLESS AND INEFFECTUAL... BECAUSE OF MY ANTI-GRAV DISC!
I GOTTA HAND IT TO YA, WIZ! YOU GOT 'IM FIRST CRACK OUTTA THE BOX!
NOW THERE'S ONLY THREE MORE TO GO!
THE WIZARD... AND SANDMAN! I SHOULDA GUESSED!
LOOK! THE FOOL IS STILL STRUGGLING!
THEN I'LL SIMPLY PUT HIM OUT OF HIS MISERY!
A DOUBLE-INTENSITY BLAST FROM MY POWER GLOVE SHOULD DO THE TRICK!
BULL'S EYE!

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WHILE, DOWN THE HALL...
STAY HERE, SUE! I DON'T LIKE WHAT I HEARD!
WHAT IS IT, REED?
HAS IT ANYTHING TO DO WITH---THE BABY?
DON'T GET ALARMED, DEAR! I JUST WANT TO---
THE DOOR! IT'S JAMMED! I--I CAN'T OPEN IT!
THERE'S SOMEONE OUT THERE... SOMEONE TRYING TO LOCK US IN!
BUT WHO? WHY?
COMPLIMENTS OF THE TRAPSTER, LADY...AND HIS POKEY LITTLE PASTE GUN!
WE'VE WAITED A LONG TIME FOR THIS...AND IT WAS SURE WORTH IT!
WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO NEXT?
JUST WATCH ME, DOLL!
I FIGGERED RICHARDS WOULD TRY SOMETHING LIKE THAT---
BUT A FAT LOTTA GOOD IT'S GONNA DO HIM!
YOU... PASTED HIS HAND---RIGHT TO THE DOOR!

AND, WE DON'T HAVETA WORRY ABOUT THE INVISIBLE GIRL! I ALREADY PASTED ALL THE WINDOWS SHUT... SO SHE CAN'T GET OUT!
THUS, WITHIN A MATTER OF MINUTES, WE HAVE RENDERED THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST SUPER-TEAM TOTALLY HELPLESS!
AND NOW... FOLLOW ME!
WHAT... DO YOU PLAN TO DO?
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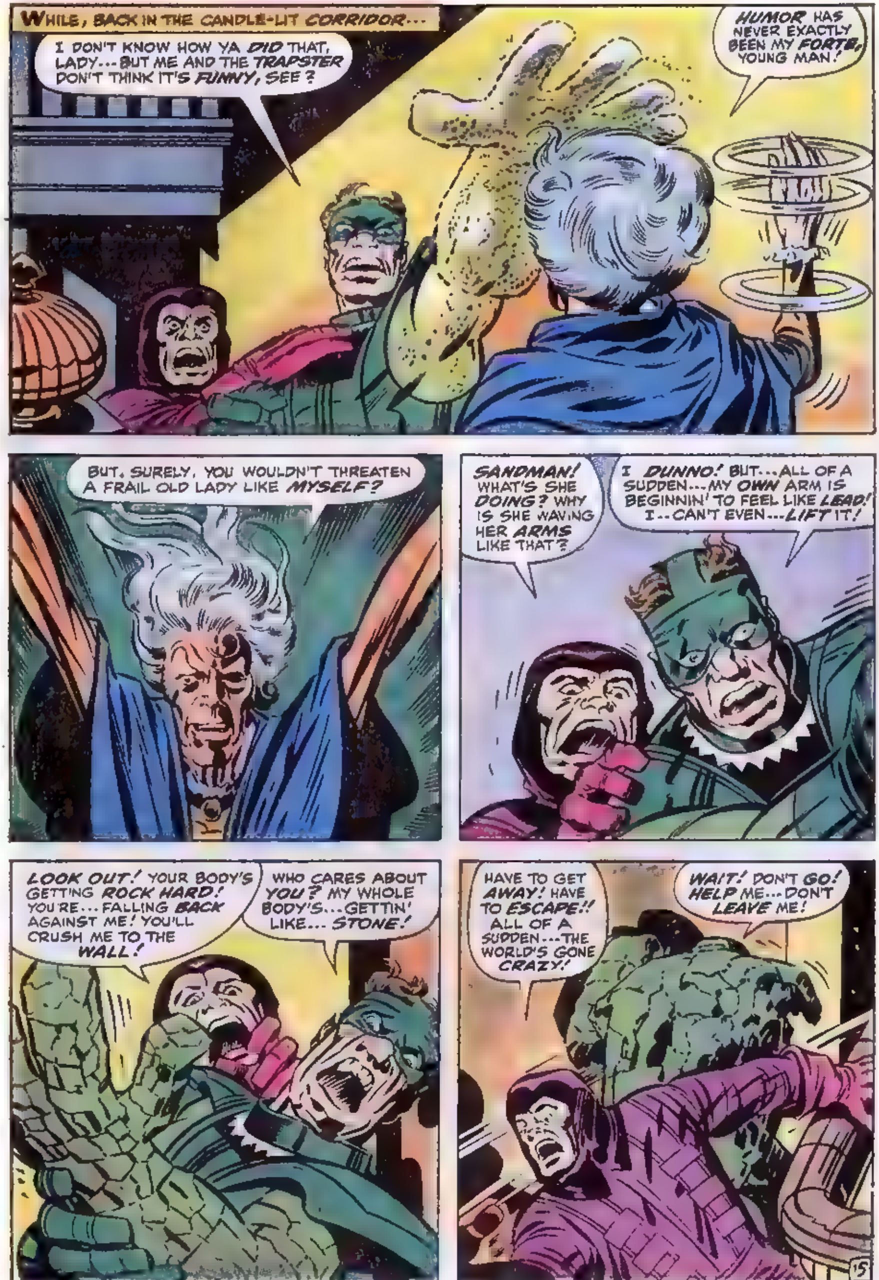
THEN, THIS IS THE TIME FOR MEDUSA TO STRIKE!
WHAT?? YOU DARE TURN AGAINST YOUR ALLIES?!!

ALLIES?!! I'D SOONER TEAM UP WITH A NEST OF SERPENTS!
I MERELY JOINED YOU SO THAT I'D BE ON HAND TO HELP THE FF... IF THE NEED AROSE!
YOU CALL YOURSELVES MEN? YOU'RE MONSTERS ...EVERY ONE OF YOU!
IT SERVES US RIGHT FOR EVER TRUSTING A DAME LIKE YOU!
BUT YOU'LL NEVER GET A CHANCE TO GLOAT OVER THE WAY YOU FOOLED US!
WHA..?!! YOUR HAIR! EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW... IT COULD MOVE SO FAST!
ZAT!
WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? ANY ONE OF US CAN TAKE HER! JUST WATCH THIS..!
YOUR AIM IS OFF... YOU'LL MISS HER!
RELAX, WIZ! I WANTED IT TO RICOCHET OFF THE WALL!
LOOK HOW THE SAND GRAINS ARE BLINDIN' HER!
12

GOOD! GOOD! SHE MUSTN'T USE HER HAIR! QUICK... PASTE IT DOWN, SO SHE CANNOT HINDER US!
THEN, AFTER THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE BEEN DISPOSED OF... I WILL TEACH HER THE HIGH PRICE OF... TREASON!
BUT NOW WE MUST MOVE FAST... BEFORE THEY CAN BREAK FREE!
ENOUGH! THAT WILL HOLD HER! NOW, FOLLOW ME!
IF YOU GET AN ITCH, LET US KNOW, DOLL! WE'LL WORRY OURSELVES SICK!
LOOK! THERE'S AN OLD DAME AT THE HEAD OF THE STAIRS!
KEEP MOVING, YOU FOOL! YOU DON'T THINK SHE CAN STOP US?
I WARN YOU! YOU MUST COME NO FURTHER!
EVEN NOW, EBONY'S HACKLES START TO RISE!
IT'LL TAKE FAR MORE THAN AN ALLEY CAT TO STOP THE WIZARD!
13

AH, BUT EBONY IS...
FAR, FAR MORE...
THAN JUST AN ALLEY CAT!
BEFORE MY EYES... IT KEEPS GROWING... I'VE GOT TO FLY... GOT TO GET AWAY..!!
KRASH!
THERE'S NO ESCAPING IT--- NO MATTER WHERE I GO!!
14



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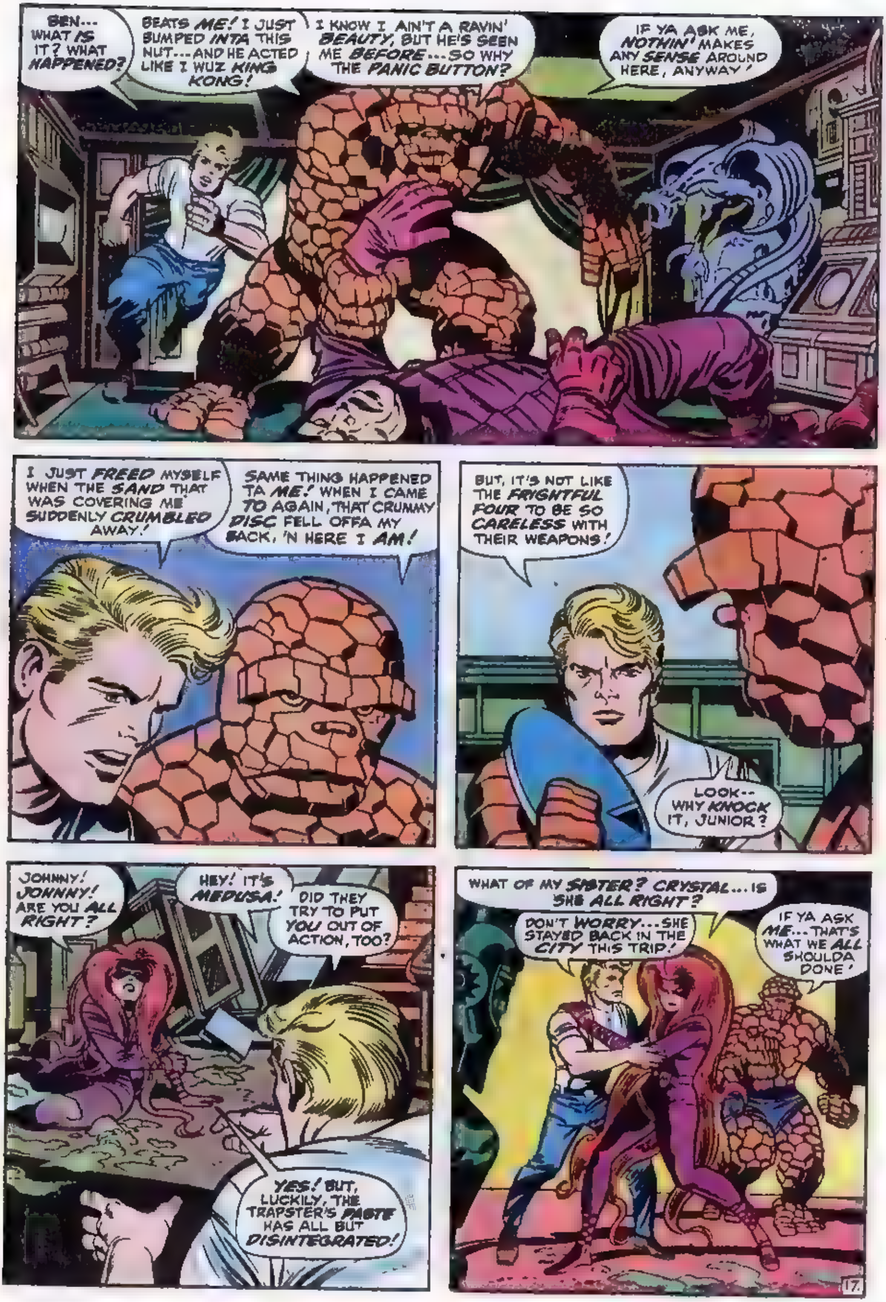
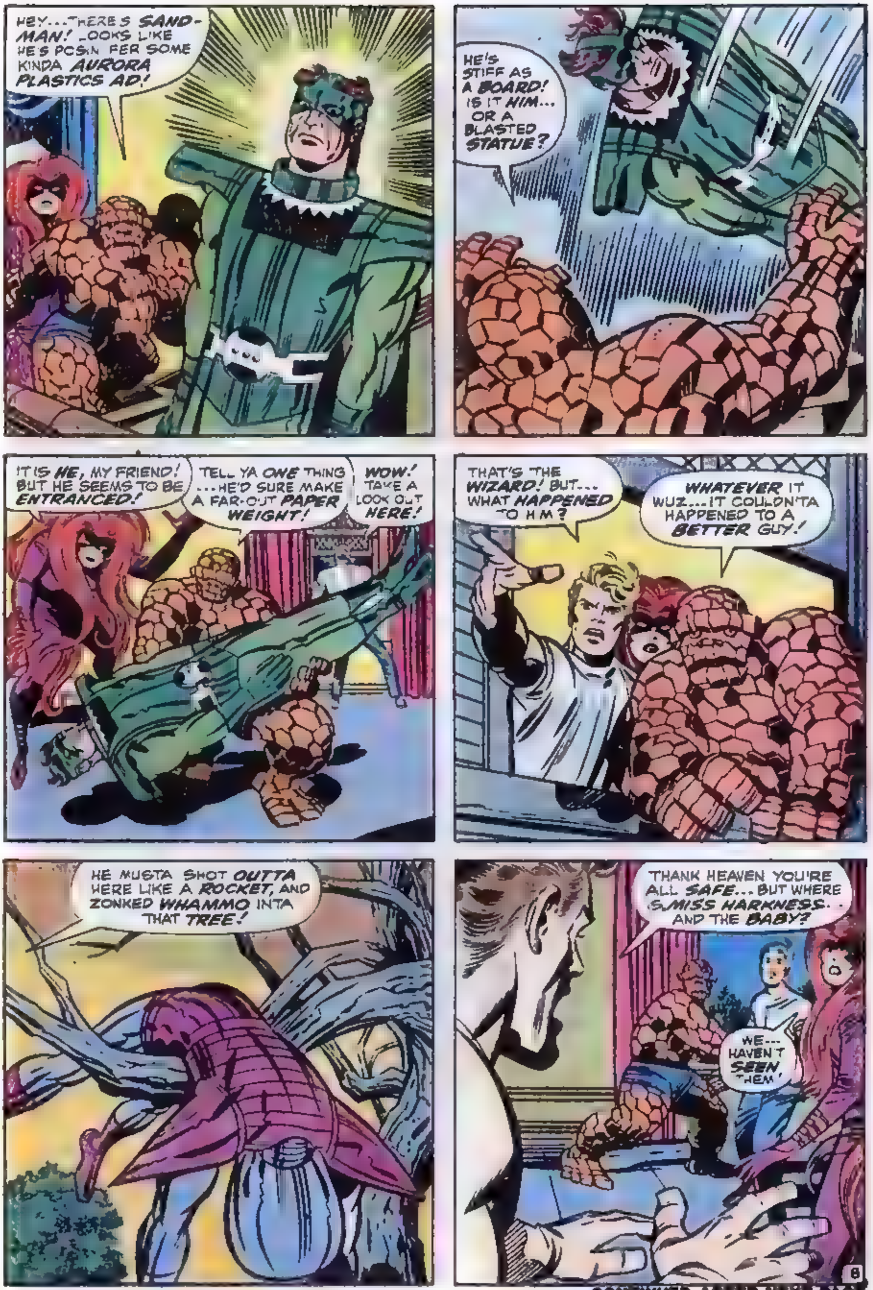
NOW IT'S UP AHEAD... BLOCKING ME! I CAN'T GET OUT... NO PLACE TO RUN!
BUT WHAT... WHAT IS IT? WHERE DID IT COME FROM?
IT'S TOO BIG! NOT EVEN MY PASTE GUN COULD STOP IT!
STAY BACK! YOU HAVE TO... STAY BACK!
NO! NO!
NOOOOO!
AND THEN, THE SCREAMING STARTS... THOUGH NO SOUND ESCAPES HIS LIPS...!
16


BEN... WHAT IS IT? WHAT HAPPENED?
BEATS ME! I JUST BUMPED INTA THIS NUT... AND HE ACTED LIKE I WUZ KING KONG!
I KNOW I AIN'T A RAVIN' BEAUTY, BUT HE'S SEEN ME BEFORE... SO WHY THE PANIC BUTTON?
IF YA ASK ME, NOTHIN' MAKES ANY SENSE AROUND HERE, ANYWAY!
I JUST FREED MYSELF WHEN THE SAND THAT WAS COVERING ME SUDDENLY CRUMBLED AWAY!
SAME THING HAPPENED TA ME! WHEN I CAME TO AGAIN, THAT CRUMMY DISC FELL OFFA MY BACK, 'N HERE I AM!
BUT, IT'S NOT LIKE THE FRIGHTFUL FOUR TO BE SO CARELESS WITH THEIR WEAPONS!
LOOK-- WHY KNOCK IT, JUNIOR?
JOHNNY! JOHNNY! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HEY! IT'S MEDUSA!
DID THEY TRY TO PUT YOU OUT OF ACTION, TOO?
YES! BUT, LUCKILY, THE TRAPSTER'S PASTE HAS ALL BUT DISINTEGRATED!
WHAT OF MY SISTER? CRYSTAL... IS SHE ALL RIGHT?
DON'T WORRY... SHE STAYED BACK IN THE CITY THIS TRIP!
IF YA ASK ME... THAT'S WHAT WE ALL SHOULDA DONE!
17



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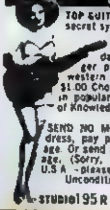

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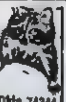

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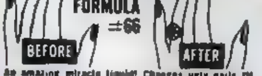

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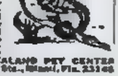

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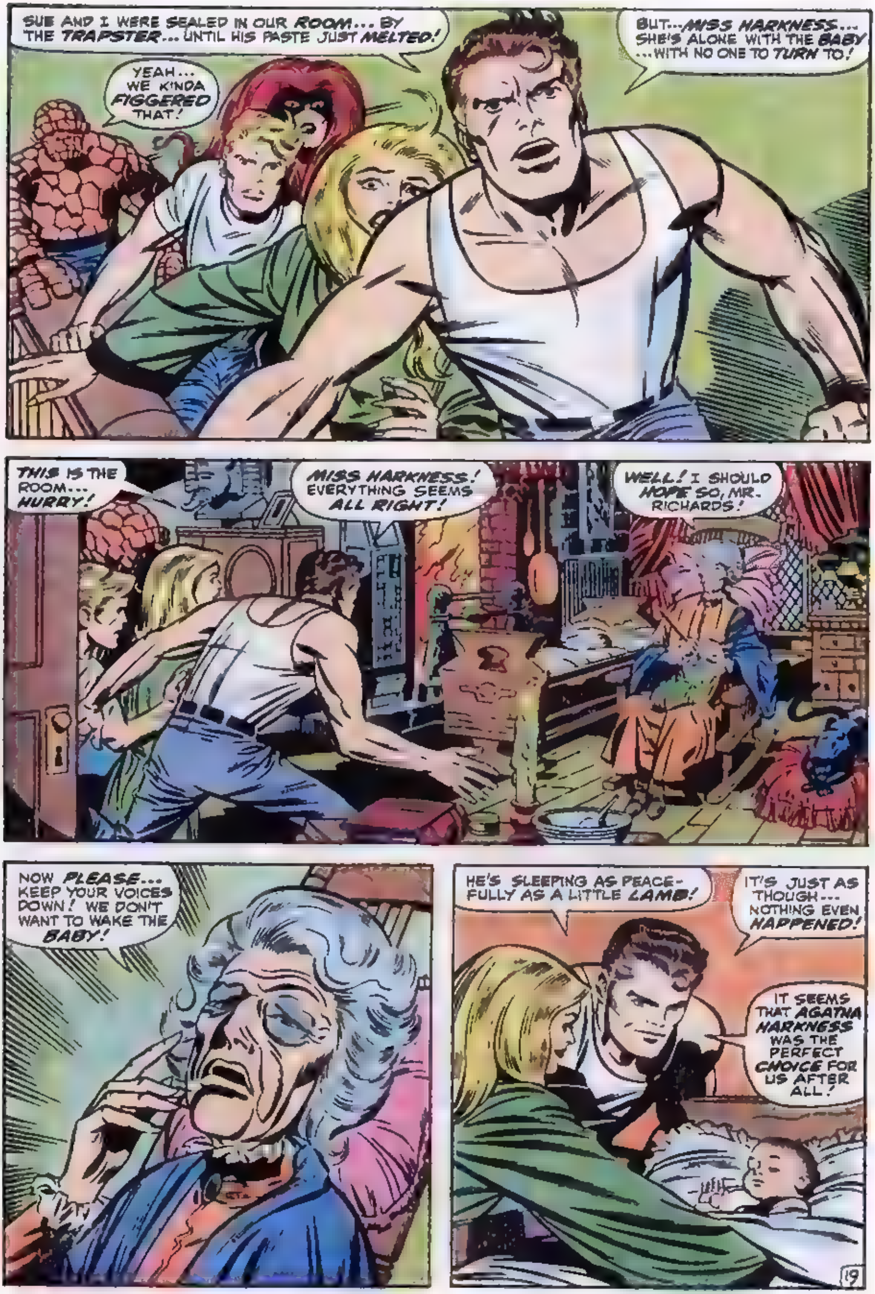
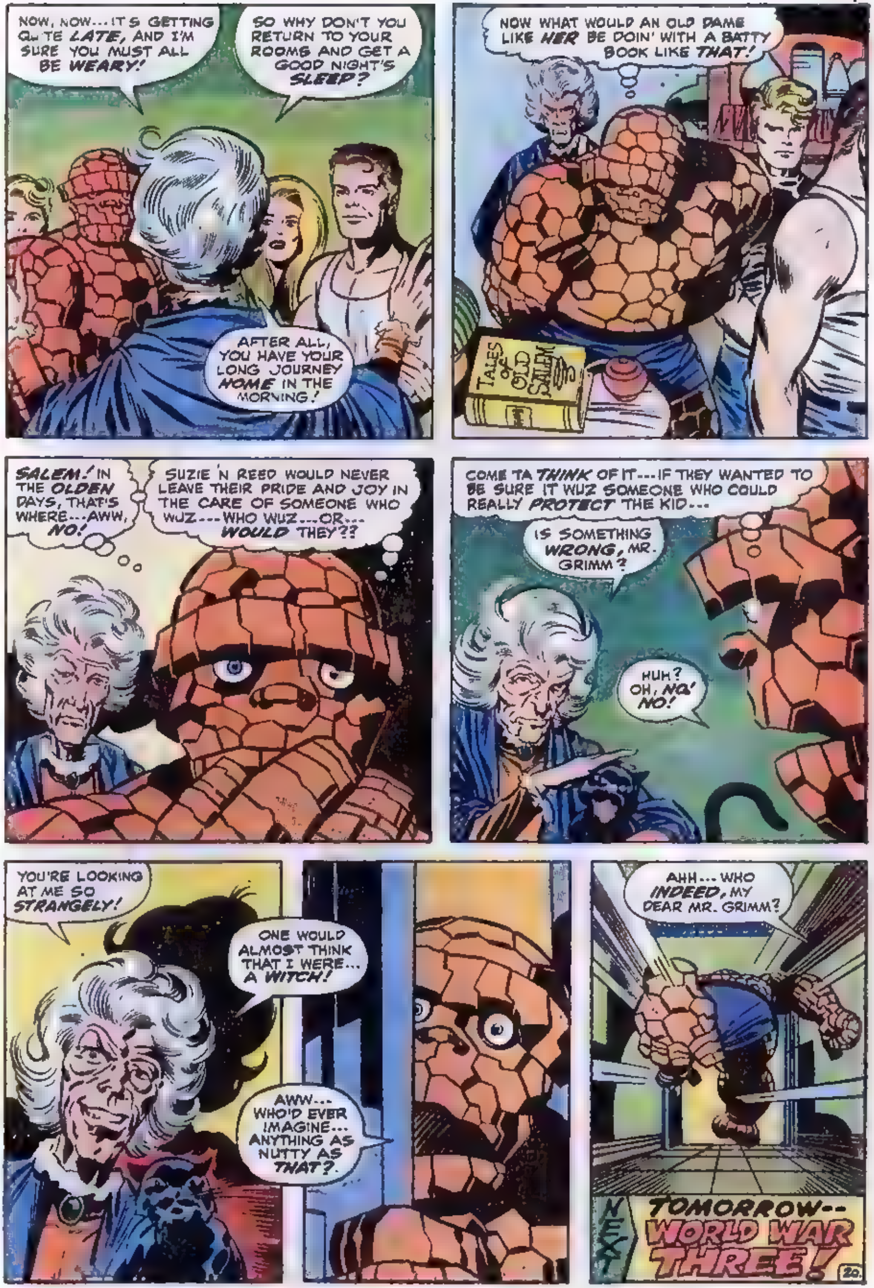

SUE AND I WERE SEALED IN OUR ROOM... BY THE TRAPSTER... UNTIL HIS PASTE JUST MELTED!
YEAH... WE KINDA FIGGERED THAT!
BUT...MISS HARKNESS... SHE'S ALONE WITH THE BABY ...WITH NO ONE TO TURN TO!
THIS IS THE ROOM... HURRY!
MISS HARKNESS! EVERYTHING SEEMS ALL RIGHT!
WELL! I SHOULD HOPE SO, MR. RICHARDS!
NOW PLEASE... KEEP YOUR VOICES DOWN! WE DON'T WANT TO WAKE THE BABY!
HE'S SLEEPING AS PEACE-FULLY AS A LITTLE LAMB!
IT'S JUST AS THOUGH... NOTHING EVEN HAPPENED!
IT SEEMS THAT AGATHA HARKNESS WAS THE PERFECT CHOICE FOR US AFTER ALL!
19


NOW, NOW... IT'S GETTING QUITE LATE, AND I'M SURE YOU MUST ALL BE WEARY!
SO WHY DON'T YOU RETURN TO YOUR ROOMS AND GET A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP?
AFTER ALL, YOU HAVE YOUR LONG JOURNEY HOME IN THE MORNING!
NOW WHAT WOULD AN OLD DAME LIKE HER BE DOIN' WITH A BATTY BOOK LIKE THAT!
TALES OF OLD SALEM
SALEM! IN THE OLDEN DAYS, THAT'S WHERE...AWW, NO!
SUZIE 'N REED WOULD NEVER LEAVE THEIR PRIDE AND JOY IN THE CARE OF SOMEONE WHO WUZ...WHO WUZ...OR... WOULD THEY??
COME TA THINK OF IT...IF THEY WANTED TO BE SURE IT WUZ SOMEONE WHO COULD REALLY PROTECT THE KID...
IS SOMETHING WRONG, MR. GRIMM?
HUH? OH, NO! NO!
YOU'RE LOOKING AT ME SO STRANGELY!
ONE WOULD ALMOST THINK THAT I WERE... A WITCH!
AWW... WHO'D EVER IMAGINE... ANYTHING AS NUTTY AS THAT?
AHH... WHO INDEED, MY DEAR MR. GRIMM?
NEXT
TOMORROW-- WORLD WAR THREE!
20.

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Fantastic Four (4) Fan Page

Send letters to LEE and KIRBY
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NEW YORK 10022 N. Y

Dear Stan and Jack,

OOooooooooo! What a mistake. It even hurts to think about it, but I suppose I must clue you in. On page four of FF #90, in the fourth panel, you have Reed saying, "You're right, Ben! We'll wait for Reed to figure something out!" Now, not only do you make out Johnny Storm to be Reed by giving him brown hair, you even include the band-aid that Reed has been wearing, and you put Sue into the picture instead of Crystal. When you guys make mistakes, at least you do it with polish. Do I get my first no-prize?

I'm in favor of having the Richards child given the name Franklin Richards, as Sgt. Kuhne suggested. It is by all means appropriate. I can't place my finger on it but there seems to be a new trend in the FF (Maybe there's been one ever since the first issue). I do know that I like it. Joe Sinnott is one of my favorite inkers, and although I won't blindly call Kirby "KING", I will say that he's one of my favorite artists. I'm not sure if anyone has noticed, but "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" is nearing its hundredth anniversary.

By the way, are you kidding? Doc Doom in his own mag? He blew up half of Latveria! How do you thing he's going to treat a comic book under his jurisdiction?

Andrew Warner, 2250 S.W. 28th St.
Miami, Florida 33133

We're not sure, Andy — but at least we'd be sure that the mag wouldn't be *dull!* Anyway, the point is a bit academic right now, as we've temporarily shelved plans for our lovable Latverian's own mag.

By the way, congratulations for being the *first* of about a zillion sharp-eyed fans to write and tell us about the Bullpen's latest booboo! Ol' eye-strainin' Stan seems to have thought, when he was writing and proofreading that ish, that it was a figure of Johnny Storm — despite the rather obvious band-aid on the head. Maybe nobody would've noticed if our cavortin' colorist had made the same mistake and given the figure blond hair — but, alas, 'twould appear that peerless Paul Reinman has better eyesight than Our Leader!

Maybe the only answer is to buy Stan a new pair of goggles — and make our colorists do all their work wearing sunglasses. What think, pal?

Dear Stan, Jack, and Joe,

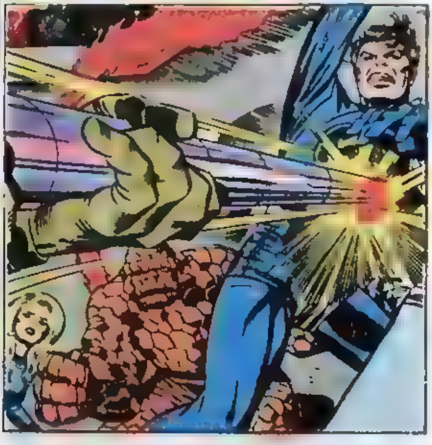
You have asked Marveldom Assembled whether or not the title of the World's Greatest Comic Mag should be changed to accommodate one Crystal (an INHUMAN), who has recently become, to all appearances, a member of the FF. Well I vote NO! The title Fantastic Four is more than the handle of a magazine. It is a symbol — and a tradition (a tough word to swallow for some). New Yorkers, and citizens everywhere in your mags think of the Fantastic Four not as four super-powered heroes, but as the decree of hope and freedom for man. We have come to love the name for its glitzy self, too! 'The Fantastic Five' sounds a little off-key to me!

But in the interests of preserving you from harangue by nitpicking mathematicians, I propose a solution. As everyone who has been around since the Special #3 knows, Sue and Reed are 'one', in a successful bond of mind and body known as wedlock, a 'team' within a team. We count Reed and Sue as one, therefore, there are really just FOUR on the team.

Thus, until Baby Richards is old enough to join forces with the Fantastic Four, the whole problem *should* be solved.

'Nuff said! John Dougherty, 3700 Dermond Road
Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania 19026

We're not sure if the Fantastic Fourophiles of the world will quite agree with your line of mathematical reasoning, John. Still, we're ready to keep an open mind on the subject — until we hear a few *more* of the hectic hypotheses which we're certain are already winging their way Marvelward via the U. S. mails. More on that *next* ish, J. D.!



Dear Stan and Jack,

After watching the Thing in many fights I have come up with a simple question. Why is he scared of bullets? In a lot of issues you have him surviving through explosions, through the Hulk, even most rays don't effect him! But then why, in FF #1, page 4 panel 4, after the policemen tried to shoot him, does he say: "His first shot missed because he was so nervous! But he'll not get another chance!" It shouldn't even bother him whether he gets hit or not!

Yet, you guys have to be good if you are able to keep the saying: "Not if I can help it" from #1 to #81 and not flinch. So remember, until the Watcher gets a haircut — Make Mine Marvel! Drew Zuckerwise, 2057 Blanche Lane
Merrick, N. Y. 1156

It's yours, Drew!

But, as usual, we have a crystal-clear explanation for that bit of bullet-dodging by Benjy 'way back in 1961. At that time, he had just *become* the Thing and he wasn't positive that he was bulletproof. Under those circumstances, critical one, wouldn't you duck? Excelsior!

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Dear Stan and Jack,

This letter may be a little longer than one page but please bear with me, for I believe that the topic is quite important to your readers.

In the October issue of the FANTASTIC FOUR you state: "We've given up our continued stories until further notice!" This, in my humble opinion, and I'm sure there MUST be many who would agree with me, is a drastic mistake. WHY? The continued story has always been a trademark with Marvel. No matter what changes may have occurred in the story there was always the immortal words 'to be continued'. You may reply, 'but that is the reason we are dropping continued stories — to break out of the continued constant groove'. I admire Marvel for wanting to be individualistic but making each story complete in one single issue is just NOT THE WAY!

You, before issue #38 of the FANTASTIC FOUR, and your competitors for years, have *already explored* that idea. Now mind you, the idea of continuing, even in a sub-plot, a story line such as we witnessed in SUB-MARINER from #1 through to about #11, the Helmet of Power, was *ridiculous*. But a pleasant 3 to 4 issue story is just what we think would be perfect.

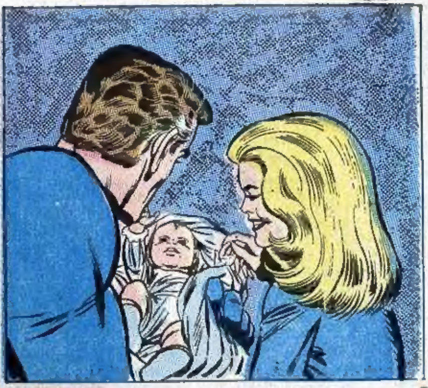
You also stated that you would have to tone down the sub-plots! GOOD GRIEF! That is what made you the leader in your field today. An example of how this has worked successfully, was in Sue's search for a house. Though unimportant to the story, it was originally presented as a sub-plot. And then of course, we witnessed how it evolved into the basis for an entire script line involving the Mole Man. Stan, through the use of both tragedy and comedy, has added emotions to characters who could easily be two-dimensional. I am afraid that with a reduction of plot these characters and their emotions would fade into the forgotten past.

Now I would ask you one question. How could stories like: FANTASTIC FOUR's #38-43 or #57-60 be reduced to one issue? In closing, may I suggest that Marvel return to the policy which you used for so many years. This will enable you to turn out single issue stories like FANTASTIC FOUR #80 or 81, or issues with a continued line like FANTASTIC FOUR's #84-87 — whenever you choose.

Whatever you do fellows, I'm still behind you ALL THE WAY!

Wayne Fredrickson, 603 Brooks Avenue
Dallas, Texas 75208

Glad to hear it, Wayne — the more so because of what Smiley wrote in the "Stan's Soapbox" section for this month. We don't want to repeat that statement here, except to mention that maybe — just maybe — we overstated our case a bit on that recent Bullpen page. 'Nuff said, Texan?



Dear Stan and Jack,

Remembering back to drawings I've seen of Jack Kirby, I have a question: Is the fact that BABY RICHARDS looks like Jack Kirby the work of Jolly Jack or Sneaky Sinnott?

Howard Leroy Davis, 38 Simpson Avenue
Pitman, New Jersey 08071

To tell the truth, Howie, we never really noticed the resemblance until you pointed it out to us. But it would be our suspicion that any similarity that you might have noticed is the work of King Kirby himself — and our suspicions will be confirmed the first time that young Franklin B. lights up a stogie. ('Course, we admit that may be a while, yet!)

Dear Stan,

In FF #90 the question was put forth: Is Stan Lee over the hill as a writer? My answer to that would be — FAT CHANCE. I feel that Stan is one of the most creative writers on the literary scene. Very few professional writers could do the things that Our Leader does with such consistent excellence. Stan was, is, and will always be a creative and inspired creator of literary fiction!

R. E. Plummer, 79 East Isabel Street
St. Paul, Minnesota 55107

Stan thanks you, R. E. — the blushing Bullpen thanks you — and most of all, Smiley's creditors thank you!

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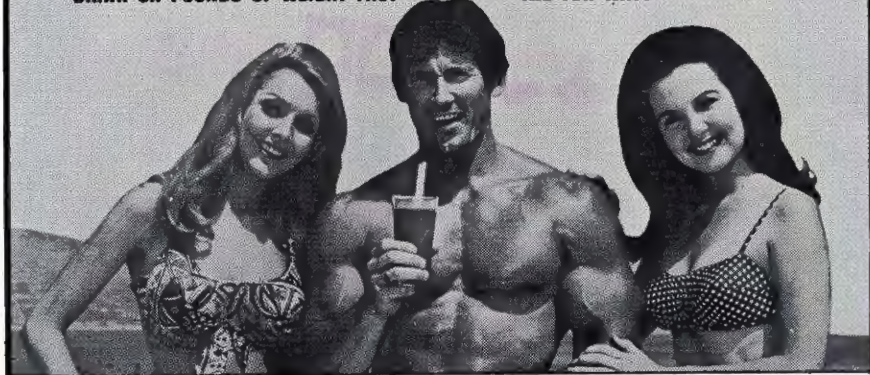

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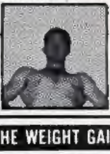

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